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H&H Committee Post-Symposium Debriefing

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April 19, 1996

From: Symposium Planning Committee
To: Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism
Subj: Recommendations following April 10-12, 1996 Symposium

1. The Symposium Planning Committee met one more time on this day to discuss our recommendations for next years symposium. Our recommendations are listed below.

a. (Andrew) The longer we do the symposium without institutional support, the longer we will have to do it without support. His recommendation is that the H&H committee dedicate energy to establishing an office for GLBT affairs. We have to figure out what we need, then ask for it, and seek to obtain institutional funding for the office.

b. We recommend that the Galanti Lounge be used in the future. The library staff was extremely helpful and supportive; the lighting turned out to be wonderful, even during the power failure, allowing the conference to continue; and the size of the space was adequate for the attendance.

c. As to whether the conference should be 2 or 3 day, we feel that either is fine. 3 days was tiring, but it also allowed us to bring presenters that added to the variety of the topics presented. It will probably be the focus that determines the length.

d. It was recommended that a panel/roundtable be included that focuses on the varying views of spirituality and sexuality.

e. The activism panel was great, and we would like to see the same thing happen, but with a focus on strategies for activism and change.

f. Videotaping. Unfortunately, we lost several presentations because we did not have one person in charge of making sure that the whole symposium was taped. Due to mixups, some tapes were re-recorded, and the camera was not turned on for a couple of the segments. The camera can be checked out from Audiovisual services, in Chafee building, for the entire time. Label tapes ahead of time, and develop a schedule of operators that covers the entire symposium.

g. Advertising. Consider doing a campus mailing, similar to the call for papers, for the brochure. Set up posters in the Union and in the Galanti Lounge. Perhaps organize a flyer-hanging social to get flyers up all over campus.

h. Press. The Cigar has gotten increasingly better over the years for coverage of GLBT events. The articles the Cigar did write were good. They did not cover the first day, because there was going to be no paper that day, and publication was decided at the end of the day. Work close with the Cigar, they are willing to cover the events. The Narragansett Times did good coverage; however, the TV stations did not respond, even though they were sent a press release and were given a phone call a couple of days prior to the event.

i. An effort must be made to target more of the symposium to our own student population. This could be done by including debates relating to sexuality, or roundtable discussions that include leaders from the large number of multicultural groups on campus. We feel that if part of the symposium were targeted to student audiences, that more students would be interested in attending. Other issues might include: dormitory life, the greek system, etc. Related to this was a discussion that we might be able to frame the titles of presentations in such a way to make it sound less "academic", to sound more enticing to students and staff.

j. There was discussion that it would be nice to include a drag show as an evening entertainment during one of the nights.

k. Fundraising. We have pretty much maxed out campus sources, we need to look to sources outside the university if we are looking at bringing in speakers that cost more money.

l. We recommend putting the Keyote speaker at the first night vice the second night. The reason we could not do it this year was lack of availability of a suitable space. Also, the committee might want to generate some suggestions for a keynote speaker for next year.

m. We had a lot of discussion concerning the planning committee. Our general agreement is that the planning committee should be an autonomous, standing committee of the H&H committee. Some things could have been expedited (mailings, etc) had the committee chair had the power to make those decisions. We found that the H&H committee did not offer enough to warrant the subcommittee needing to return to the full committee for approval. If it is a such a planning committee, then those H&H members who are interested in the process can come to the planning meetings.

n. Planning the symposium is a major effort. Even if it is local in scope vice national, increasing visibility requires more emphasis on developing relationships with the press, intense outreach to student groups, etc. There are basically 4 major tasks involved: fundraising, press and advertisement, social/hospitality, and proposal screening/program development. The symposium planning committee was composed of 2 staff and 4 undergraduate students. Whereas each task warrants its own subcommittee and volunteers to do the job effectively, every member was a member of all task subcommittees, and the chairs were chairs of the subcommittees as well. If the H&H committee decides that it wants to do

...posium, then each member of the committee should commit to taking a significant part
in the process.

4/13/96

Dear Gary and Andrew:

Here's a separate letter to share with H and H re plans for next year.

As the H and H committee begins the process of de-briefing now, we wanted to add the following:

1) last year, before putting the videos of the symposium in the library media room, we made copies of them to be kept in an alternate place in case of vandalism, loss or theft. Last year's alternate copies are in our possession.

2) the idea suggested by Brown University's chaplain to invite URI administrators to attend next year's symposium is a great one to follow through on; can we add to that the suggestion to invite the leaders of all of the fraternities and sororities on campus for a panel discussion, as well as to brainstorm other ways to bring students especially to the symposium who may not otherwise know about it?;

3) we hardly had energy for the full three days and wonder if we should return to two full days next year;

4) what are some of the follow-up activities that we want to initiate? How about a series of editorials written for The Cigar on each of the issues covered by the symposium--a different focus each week or month? This would be a way of continuing discussion begun by the symposium and keeping the University aware of the issues in a regular way rather than once a year. Perhaps a different member of H and H could volunteer to write each of these. They could be short and could even be made up mostly of provocative questions.

5) Next year it might be worthwhile to initiate a new way to document post-symposium coverage in local newspapers. Maybe we need to volunteer from within H and H to write up summaries of each panel ourselves. [Gary has done this on his own in the past, but such a huge task shouldn't rest on one person] (One of my former students asked me some questions about the symposium one day probably only because I was someone she recognized. Then she said that The Cigar told her only to go to the keynote address--she could probably get a sense of the symposium from that! We were appalled to see that The Cigar made no mention of the symposium on the first day--instead they featured the snow storm. We could also consider involving journalism classes or faculty in the symposium so that students in such classes could attend and report on the event.

6) Maybe it's time now to have a panel on domestic partner benefits at URI and invite union leaders;

7) We were disappointed with Barbara Smith's keynote and feel a little guilty since we recommended her. She gave virtually the same talk she'd given the year before at RIC, but less enthusiastically even. A few things to consider for keynote next year: often less well-known scholars/writers/activists etc. give better presentations. For whatever reason, people who haven't become public figures yet, are often more generous, more focussed, and more rigorous in their presentations. Second, it might be nice for a switch to invite a creative writer.

8) Ask Wally about his idea re a march/protest at the conference.

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